may be prepared. The draft Terms of Reference (ToR) for the scoping study was sent by the MoST to the MoEF on H" April, 2000 and was approved by the MoEF on 17"[1] May, 2000. The Techno-Economic viability and detailed Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) study of the project were undertaken by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) and forwarded by the Ministry of Shipping (MoS) to the MoEF on 5th November, 2003. The Expert Committee examined the issue on the basis of the documents and a presentation made by NEERI on 5th February, 2004. The Committee made certain observations.

While conveying Environmental Clearance MoEF incorporated all conditions relevant to the observations made by the Expert Committee which, *inter-alia,* cover the entire marine and adjoining coastal environment. At present, the issue of Sethusamudram Project is before the Hon'ble Supreme Court and is *sub-judice.*

Melting of Gomukh Glacier

447. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Gomukh glacier, the origin of Gangotri (river Ganges) is melting and slowly vanishing;

(b) if so, details thereof and reasons therefor;

(c) its impact on the availability of water during next two decades; and

(d) the steps being taken to save and restore the existence of Gomukh glacier?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) The studies carried out by Department of Science and Technology on Gangotri Glacier have revealed that the Glacier was receding at the rate of 17.15 m/year during 1971-2004 period. Another study estimated a retreat of 12.10 m during the year 2004-05. Compilations of the data on secular movement of glaciers have revealed that the majority of the glaciers of the Himalayan region are passing through a phase of recession, which is a worldwide phenomenon. The causative factors for this variable retreat may be subnormal snowfall, higher temperature during summer, less severe winter or a combination of all of them. It could also be attributed to the phenomenon of rise in temperature, global warming, to some extent.

(c) The Government has not undertaken any study to correlate the river discharge, water level changes in sea and ocean and the recession of the glaciers. In addition to the glaciers, seasonal snow cover, groundwater and rainfall contribute to the river discharge. Due to enhanced melting of ice, consequent upon faster recession, the runoff of the Himalayan rivers may increase marginally.

(d) The recession of glaciers cannot be prevented on a large scale in view of the nature of Indian Himalayan Glaciers being debris covered, the economic feasibility, the scale of operation and the likelihood of pollution. As the prime responsibility of reducing emissions that enhance global warming lies with the developed countries, the Government of India has been pressing in international negotiations that these countries should take deeper emission reduction commitments and for a longer period.